

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VDH 05-39

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MAINTAIN, DON'T GAIN DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Virginia Department of Health Offers Tips on Sensible Holiday Eating

(RICHMOND, Va.)—'Tis the season for celebrating with family and friends, but one tradition you don't have to keep is gaining additional pounds during the holidays. Since food plays an important part in many holiday and family traditions, it is easy to see how this weight gain can happen. Unfortunately, even with the best intentions, people have a hard time losing the weight they gained when the holidays are over, and those extra pounds can add up over the years.

According to a 2002 Virginia Department of Health (VDH) study, nearly 59 percent of adults in Virginia are overweight or obese. To help reverse this trend, VDH recommends the following tips to enjoy the festivities while maintaining your weight instead of gaining this holiday season:

- Pay attention to portion sizes and remember the importance of moderation. Any foods, even traditional holiday foods, can fit into a healthy eating plan. Often just a taste or even a small portion can satisfy your taste buds without expanding your waistline. When choosing holiday treats, be selective by taking only what you really want to eat and keeping the portions small.
- Be physically active every day, even if you can't stick to your normal exercise routine. Take a walk with the family or celebrate the season with an evening of dancing. Physical activity can help relieve stress, regulate appetite and burn up extra calories from holiday eating.
- Eat a light snack before going to holiday parties. If you are hungry when you arrive, you will be more likely to overeat or choose high-fat and high-calorie foods. Bring a low-calorie or low-fat dish to the party to give yourself a healthy option. And remember, just because food is there does not mean you have to eat it.
- Choose your beverages wisely. High-calorie drinks such as alcohol, soda, fruit punch and eggnog can contain between 150 and 450 calories per glass, depending on the beverage. Select figure-friendly drinks such as water and diet soda instead.

To learn more about portions sizes and physical activity visit www.mypyramid.gov. For information about combating obesity and making healthy lifestyle choices, visit the VDH Web site www.vdh.virginia.gov.

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